

Fishes of Guilford Courthouse National Military Park

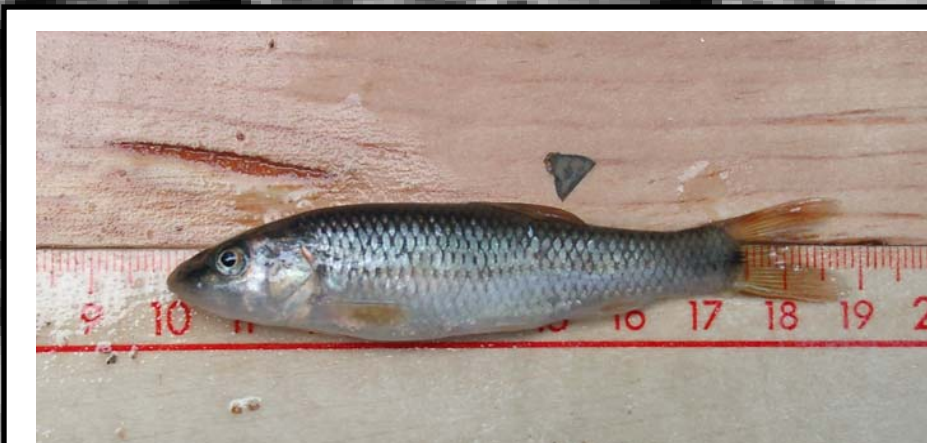


Although Guilford Courthouse National Military Park preserves and interprets a 1781 battle that helped hasten the end of the Revolutionary War, it also contains some significant and interesting natural resources.

In 2004, National Park Service biologists sampled the streams that occur within Guilford Courthouse National Military Park to discover what fish live within the park. Surveys were conducted with electrofishing, a device used to deliver electricity to the water that stuns fish. In each survey, fish were captured, identified and measured, and released alive back into the stream.

Surprisingly, given the small size of the streams and the fact that one even goes underground for several hundred feet, the biologists were able to collect and identify a total of 14 different fish species. The most abundant species were creek chubs (*Semotilus atromaculatus*), bluehead chubs (*Nocomis biguttatus*), and bluegill sunfish (*Lepomis macrochirus*).

The creek chubs found within the park were some of the largest ever seen by the biologists; some were as large as a small bass. A few largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) were captured, but only one was larger than about 6 inches. Rosyside dace (*Clinostomus funduloides*) was one of the most interesting species found.



Another of the more common, and plain looking fish, was the bluehead chub. This species, like the creek chub, regularly live in small, headwater streams, and can tolerate a wide range of conditions.



Inarguably the most colorful fish species collected in the park, the rosyside dace is characterized by vivid red coloration and a large mouth; much larger than most other minnows.

© Noel Burkhead & Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries (Fishes of Virginia)
Photographer: Noel Burkhead
Image ID#: 115
Location: Coal Creek, Carroll Co., VA
Date: 4 June 1984
Gender: male
Life Stage: adult

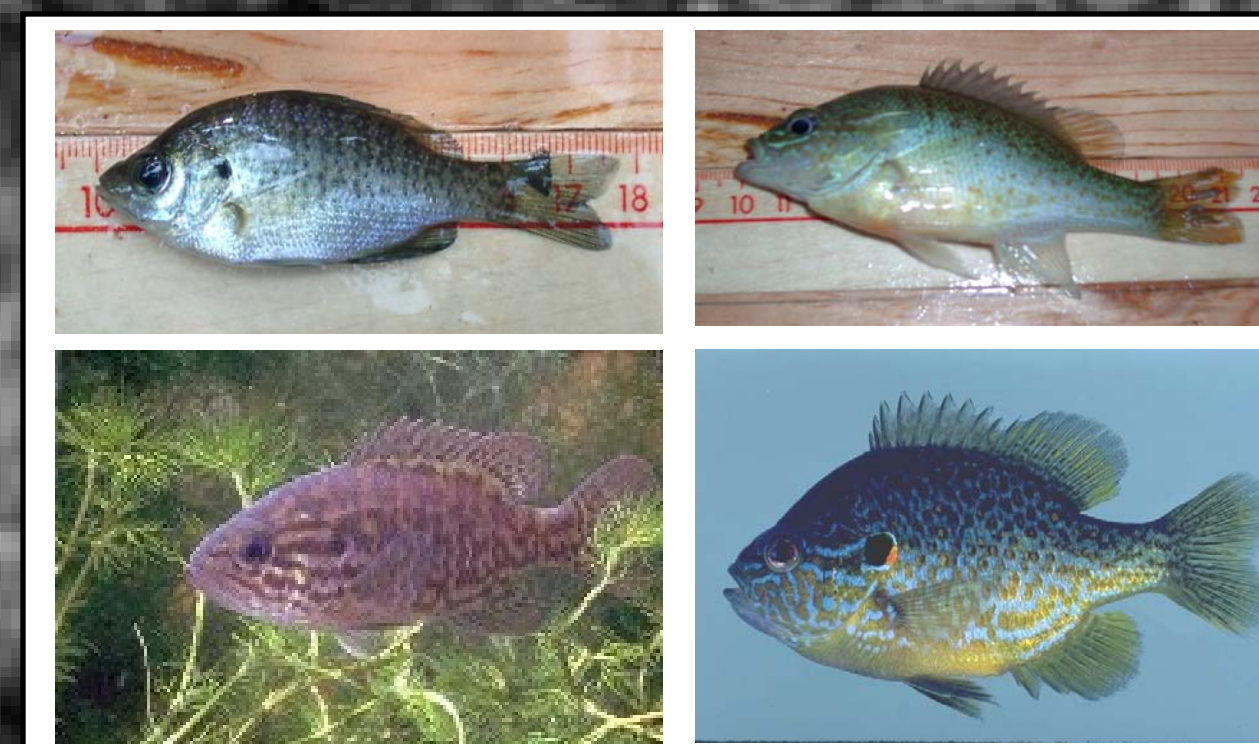


Creek chubs, a common species in small streams, were found throughout the park. In one location, individuals up to 8 inches long were found, some of the biggest found anywhere.

Semotilus atromaculatus—Creek chub
© Noel Burkhead & Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries (Fishes of Virginia)
Photographer: Noel Burkhead
Image ID#: 136
Location: Pauls Creek, Carroll Co., VA
Date: 20 June 1984
Gender: male
Life Stage: adult



The only two true game species found in the park were largemouth bass (left) and black crappie (right). Most individuals found were juveniles, not adults, with the largest bass being only 7 inches long.



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Photographer: Noel Burkhead
Image ID#: 86
Location: Craig River, Craig Co., VA
Date: 17 May 1984
Gender: male
Life Stage: adult

Several species of sunfish (from top left, clockwise: bluegill, redbreast, warmouth, and pumpkinseed) were also found in the park, mainly in Hunting Creek. The downstream location of Hunting Creek with the lakes in Greensboro County Park likely results in it having the most fish diversity in the park.



While not a fish, mussels, which are indicators of water quality, were found in the park in Hunting Creek. Threats to these species include sedimentation, which increases in streams as urban areas become more developed.



The only sucker species that was found, the creek chubsucker is another regular inhabitant of small streams. It's mouth is adapted for feeding on the bottom of the stream, hence its classification as a sucker.

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Photographer: Noel Burkhead
Image ID#: 80
Location: Craig River, Craig Co., VA
Date: 17 May 1984
Gender: male
Life Stage: adult



The eastern mosquitofish is the only livebearer that was found during the survey. Livebearers, as their name suggests, give birth to live young rather than laying eggs. Mosquitofish, also as their name implies, have been stocked widely as a way to control mosquitoes.



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Photographer: Noel Burkhead
Image ID#: 22
Location: Tettye Creek, Charlotte Co., VA
Date: 10 July 1984

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Several species of catfish (flat bullhead, brown bullhead, and yellow bullhead) were found in the park, mainly in Hunting Creek downstream of the lakes in the Greensboro County Park. These fish are fairly tolerant of pollution.